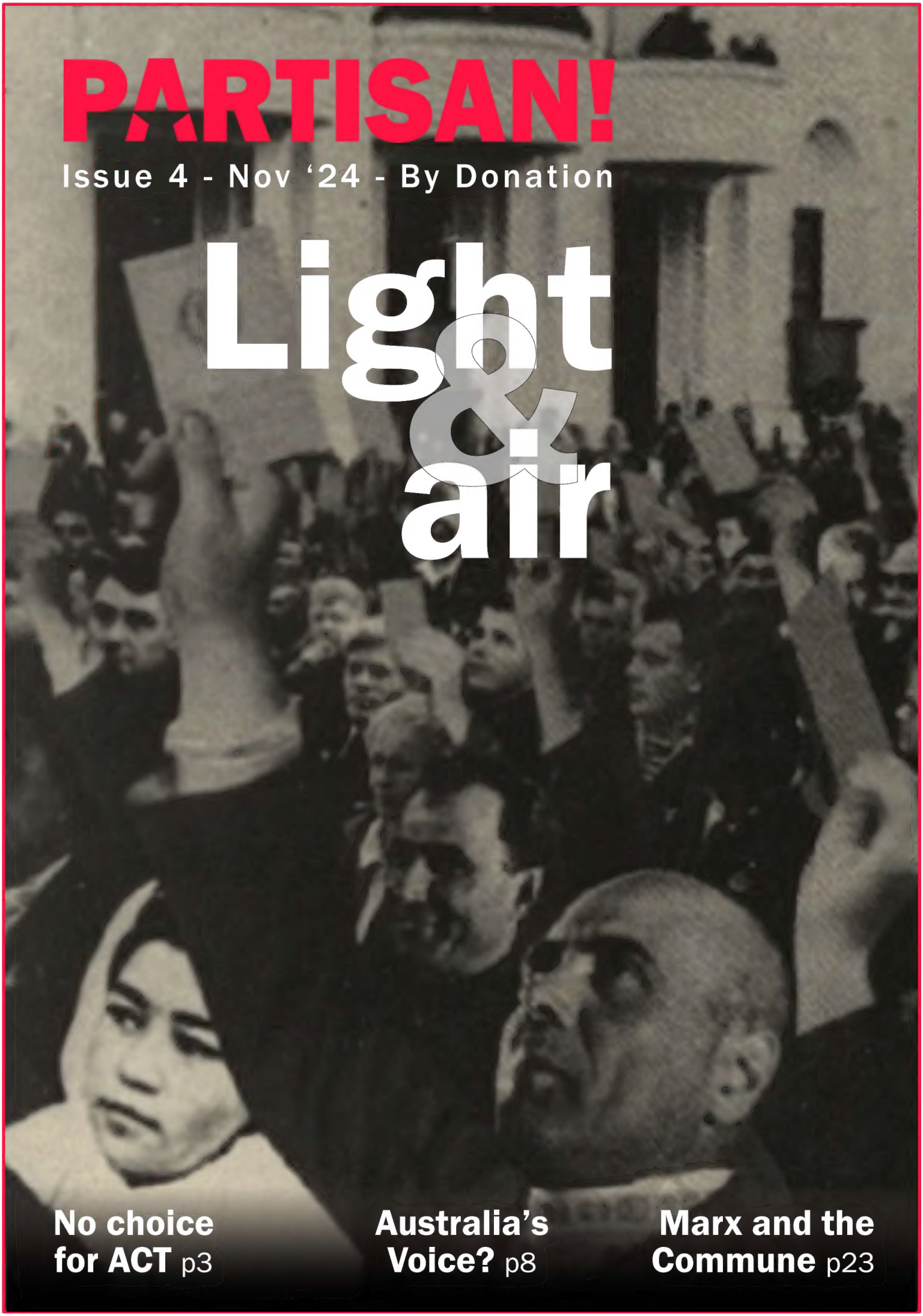
# PARTISAN!

Issue 4 - Nov '24 - By Donation

# Light & air



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# PARTISAN!

# Issue 4


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## About

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia – that section of the left which views the formation of a mass Workers Party as its primary task. Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states.

We hope you find Partisan to be interesting, and come to support the journal.

## Submissions

Partisan accepts and encourages unsolicited submissions from left-wing radicals and militants of all backgrounds. Articles can range from 800-1,000 words, and essays are limited to 2,000 words. Word count is less restrictive for other submissions including letters and reports, but we would encourage you to keep them concise.

Please proof-read etc prior to submitting. Our staff will also sub-edit as necessary. We publish monthly, so aim to submit before the 25th of the month at the absolute latest (15th-20th is ideal). Simultaneous submissions accepted on a case-by-case basis.

We are primarily interested in topics such as Marxist political economy, political strategy and tactics, engagement with Communists pasts and futures, critiques of Liberalism and Capitalism, interviews, and features. When making a submission, please include your name (or pseudonym), a summary of the piece, and any other relevant information (such as photos and sourcing). All submissions are to be emailed to the publishing email (see left).

# Towards a Democratic Republic

Partisan Editors

Small-scale protests and speak-outs against the monarchy were held across Australia during the visit of the so-called "King" last month. Many of these were organised by our own members in the RCO. The intention of these actions was to agitate the working class against the institution of the monarchy. Public speak-outs in Brisbane and Melbourne were organised and attended by a handful of RCO comrades on the first day of the royal visit to Australia. Our speak-outs called out the genocidal basis on which the monarchy was brought to Australia, and its legacy as a brutal vestige of feudalism. We did not echo calls from liberal republicans to simply exchange the monarch for an Australian President, but rather for the formation of a workers' republic, in which the working class is the ruling class.

The republican struggle in Australia has largely died following the defeat of the 1999 referendum on an Australian republic. Mainstream liberal republican movements, both here and overseas, focus on the position of the monarch itself being undemocratic. Whilst this assessment is correct, they do not provide a program for a democratic project that addresses the undemocratic nature of the capitalist "democracy" modern monarchs preside over.

Majority rule is not possible when producers are excluded from the means of production. The struggle for a democratic republic needs to be emphasised as the form of rule of the working class. It is through this formation that collective ownership of the means of production can be attained, and the capitalist era can be consigned to history.

This edition of the Partisan, Partisan 4: Light & Air, covers the proletarian struggle for democracy, and discusses ways forward for the Real movement.

ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr speaks at Labor's campaign launch | Photo: Newswire

# Nothing ever happens without the Communist Party

**Maxine**

*Comrade Maxine opines on the 2024 Australian Capital Territory general election*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The 2024 ACT general election has since the time of writing, concluded on the 19th of October with the 23-year incumbent Labor winning the most seats, and the Greens winning the balance of power. This article was not able to be included in last month's issue as previously intended due to scheduling constraints.*

You'd be forgiven for despairing as to the choices on offer this election.

The Liberals demonstrate the neoliberal habit of forgetting how to do maths, campaigning for more hospital spaces and more police as well as tax cuts. More hospital spaces would certainly be welcome, as Canberran hospitals are known for long wait times, but don't trust them not to pull some paperwork trickery rather than actually deliver. More cops on the beat won't reduce crime rates, which are a result of poverty and inequality rather than moral degradation. It also won't solve the more concerning habit of territory federal police systematically covering up for sexual crimes and hate crimes by coercing victims into dropping their accusations. So much for the party of rapists, property owners, and culture war profiteering racists.

Trusting anything that comes out of the Labor party would be a mistake too. They're the ruling party in the ACT and have had three years to tackle the cost of living crisis, which they've spent arguing with the Liberals over a stadium. While rent has been kept low relative to other states and territories due to the rental cap, the poorer sections of the working class in the ACT that work in minimum or close-to-minimum wage service work are nonetheless struggling with high rents and higher increases in consumer prices. If you're anything less than an executive level public servant in this city, forget about owning your own home, as house prices continue their meteoric rise.

In the ACT, Labor is not a party of the working class. Its basis is in the public service workers union and construction union bureaucracies, who act in their own interests that are loosely aligned with that of workers. I have experience with the efforts of these bureaucrats who, hoping to obtain Labor parliamentary or

staffer positions for their loyalty, ignored and sidelined unionists who demanded annual pay rises indexed at inflation +1% in addition to the three year pay increase, unlimited sick leave, and paid gender transition leave.

At best, Labor has delivered at a federal level for the wealthiest public service workers, bringing in industrial bargaining for the entire public service that led to a large negotiated percentage pay rise across the service over three years. While efforts are being made towards an equalisation in pay between federal departments, you are still getting little out of this pay rise if you are a lower ranking public servant, who are predominantly female and non-white. Of course, this pay rise remains under inflation and doesn't make up for more than a decade of wage stagnation.

At its worst, Labor presides over an industrial dictatorship that stifles militant workers demanding better conditions. To restore construction sector profits, they have used the excuse of organised crime links with the CFMEU bureaucracy in Victoria to shatter the entire union in every state. The system of enterprise bargaining, which Labor invented and allowed Liberal party reform to, undermines union organisation across entire sectors. Sectoral bargaining is necessary to organise the sorts of workers that are the poorest in Canberra, hospitality and retail workers, who face common enemies yet remain isolated in hundreds of small businesses or franchises.

The kinds of downwardly mobile university-educated middle class that I refer to tend to find their home in the Greens party, who struggle to appeal to less educated workers. The Greens make ambitious election promises, some of which would be echoed by a communist party electoral platform, but expecting them to deliver is a lost cause. Ignore them when they tell you "we just need a couple more seats, then Labor will have to listen to us!" If they've been in coalition for so long and achieved nothing resembling their ambitions to 'end homelessness', how will a few more seats help them?

Feeling alienated yet?

The makeup of the Legislative Assembly after this or that election isn't a result of the clash of opinions in the marketplace of ideas, or of people voting with their best conscience for the greater good. Politics is about class.

The Greens can't win a majority in the ACT because they sneer on the working class. Their basis in the anti-Labor dissenting middle class gives them notions of white-collar success that make them allergic to mass collective politics - the politics of the working class. While the middle class are certainly working class, in the sense that they have nothing to sell but their bodies and earn wages, they have short-sighted interests. Rather than developing political consciousness as workers and agitating for revolution, they act as temporarily embarrassed millionaires. They want to escape, not liberate.

To act as servants of the working class is conformism to the Greens. They find donations from collectives like unions embarrassing, as corrupting the moral independence of their politicians. The Greens will never win a majority in the ACT because they have no interest in getting into the dirty politics of the public service and union bureaucracies and winning them away from Labor.

While the Liberals represent property owners and the interests of private business, Labor represents a similarly dangerous enemy - the union bureaucrats that collaborate with capital against the interests of the workers.

This is the source of the alienation you feel. None of these are parties of the workers! The only workers' party is the Communist Party, so we need to make one. The only party that won't lie to you.

The politics of the Greens and Labor are dead ends for the working class. The Greens have some good policies, but they cannot enact them without a working class basis. They want to turn the dial towards workers, make some things easier, but this is a distraction from our destiny! We must organise into a party that is actually our's, take power for ourselves, abolish the parasitic racist property owners and rapist bosses, and create a society where everyone is provided for. This is an impossibility under the boot of capitalism and these parties that pretend to serve us, who keep us in this state of ignorance.

# Wither republicanism?

Anhthony Furia

*Anthony Furia reflects on the current nature of the fight for a Democratic Republic in Australia.*

The fight for a Democratic Republic in Australia has, historically, been absent from political relevance. Some may point to the democratic aspirations of the Eureka Stockade, yet such an instant of struggle was, while democratic, certainly not Republican. Other moments, such as Howard's plebiscite for a Republic, were thoroughly republican, but bourgeois republican - the furthest thing from democratic! All things considered then, the state of the struggle for a democratic republic currently is a continuation with its history of political irrelevance. Australians care less about republicanism than they did 30 years ago, and 30+ years of a splintered sectarian left has rendered the demand for a democratic republic even more impotent than the demand for a bourgeois one. What we must attempt to understand, in the face of overwhelming popular apathy and a continued abandonment of the struggle for democracy by the left, is precisely why the struggle for a democratic republic remains so marginalised - what is presenting its flourishing? What part does the socialist movement currently play? What can we do to popularise this struggle? This is not so much as an autopsy of the current state of things - that would require more depth, and imply the movement for a democratic republic is permanently deceased - but a brief sketch. A drawing out of the factors involved in where this world-historic struggle has found itself today, and a scratching out of what the next steps in this struggle must be.

The Bourgeois Republican movement is the first subject of our query, or would be if it could be found in any serious, substantial capacity. It seems that such a movement has, for the most part, collapsed in on itself into vague sentiment and political apathy. With Australian capital either completely silent on the question of a Republic, or profoundly and vocally anti-Republican, and with the Australian population demotivated and demobilised since the failure of the 1999 referendum, Canberra has no reason to even entertain the question of Republicanism. Albanese, the muddle-headed incompetent that he is, has 'put on hold' plans for a Republican referendum - paying lip-service to the movement, and little else. The Australian Republic Movement has been hopelessly NGO-ified; a collection of fools and ghouls in symbiotic relation with the subdued body of "green and gold" bourgeois nationalism. To say anything more about the bourgeois republican movement seems to be a waste of words - they are inept, incapable, and relegated to the political sidelines with the occasional nod in their direction from the real figures in high politics.

The reality is that the Australian national identity, Australian nationalism, is perfectly comfortable within the shade of the British Empire and in embrace with the British monarchy. In fact, maintaining these 'cultural' and formal political ties with the 'West' is, whether they recognise it or not, a benefit for those who identify with the Australian colonial project and state. In an extremely rare stroke of clarity, Huntington was right when he stated that Australia was "torn" between West and East. Without political and economic ties explicitly to the West, Australian nationalism loses its very basis as a western nationalism, a colonial nationalism, an imperial nationalism. Could it reshape itself in the absence of these ties? Most definitely. Is the Monarchy the only way to secure these ties? Certainly not. Yet it remains a convenient way to secure this national project - and, in the absence of a major, concerted shift in the character of Australian national identity, there is no fundamental self-interest from the ideological demagogues of the Australian bourgeoisie nor from Australian capital itself to pursue a Republic. The movement is thus useless even in its own pursuits - it is nothing, and will remain nothing without some great reactionary revival of Australian national

Lidia Thorpe confronts King Charles during his visit to Australia | Photo: AAP

republicanism (may it never come). The only anti-monarchy sentiment from Parliament with the King's visit was Lidia Thorpe - and such statements came from a place of progressive Blak nationalism, rather than any preoccupation with the democratic struggle as a broader project of emancipation.

But we have talked enough about bourgeois republicanism - it is, even in its 'best' form, a malformed version of only part of what we demand in the struggle for a democratic republic after all. Instead, we shall turn our critical eye to the Australian public as such, and their role in the current state of the struggle for a democratic republic. That role is almost total disengagement - apathy, disinterest, and indifference. Those of a more progressive inclination will agree, in vague terms, with the notion of an Australian Republic (as will some of those with a reactionary nationalist inclination) yet they remain disinterested in the struggle for it - let alone the struggle for a democratic republic. The unfortunate truth is, post-1999, the average Australian does not care about the democratic struggle - they are not stupid, nor ignorant, for this lack of investment; there has really been no struggle for them to care about in the first place! As communists, this lack of engagement should not dishearten us in the slightest - almost all of what we advocate is wildly unpopular and has been for decades, and we understand political consciousness is not spontaneous, but shaped by education and tested in struggle. Is it any wonder that, at this current moment, the Australian populace writ large is disengaged with the struggle for a democratic republic (or even a bourgeois republic) when there is no agitation around it? When education and struggle are absent?

So our attention must turn to those who should, in theory, be responsible for this agitation, for raising the demand for a democratic republic, and ask ourselves; what have they been doing instead? Who is this elusive subject, this (theoretical) carrier of the banner of democracy? The socialist movement. Where has it found itself? Far away from democratic struggle - as if it is organisational repellant. Perhaps an example is in order. Recently, the RCO coordinated speak outs in Brisbane and Melbourne against the King's visit and in favour of the democratic republic. To their credit, the Spartacist League of Australia endorsed the event in Melbourne, and committed time and resources to it. Other sects in the socialist movement either failed to respond completely to outreach, declined, or stated their willingness to attend before utterly failing to show up in any capacity (with the exception of perhaps the CPA-ML, although they didn't make themselves apparent).

Certainly, one event (by a frankly middling, in terms of membership and influence, sect in the socialist movement) can't be extrapolated

to ascertain the very nature of the struggle for a democratic republic today - but it isn't simply one event. It is a consistent pattern of ignoring, minimising, and downplaying the importance of the democratic struggle - of sidelining it, of utilising it unproportionately and only in service of the reproduction of the sect. The slogan of a democratic republic, indeed in almost all respects the question of democracy (other than the inane protest chant "this is what democracy looks like" - which it isn't, democracy is far more than organising a single-issue sect protest) no longer occupies central, or indeed any stage, in the socialist movement's imaginary.

Why is this the case? Why has the socialist movement neglected this struggle? There are many reasons - but the primary one is the fractured nature of the socialist movement itself - its existence as sects, as opposed to a communist party, and, as consequence, the historical undoing of the merger between the socialist movement and the workers' movement. In a splintered movement detached from the workers' movement as such, the standard sect will continue to operate as if it itself is the genesis for the party.

Yet it is small, it is competing with other groups who see themselves as the rightful inheritors of Marxism's mandate, and it is unable to connect with the workers' movement as a party would. As such, shortcuts to grow membership, to outcompete other groups for the thin layer of the population who radicalise each year, to attempt (in vain) to merge with the workers' movement as such, the modern sect finds itself increasingly susceptible to a range of so-called 'strategies.' Many of these involve the essential abandonment of the democratic struggle - they may centre almost entirely on economic demands, may emphasise the immediate plight of specific sections of the working class over the project of scientific socialism, or may seek to tail spontaneous social movements as they emerge - scraping together the membership to reproduce itself, and an often schizophrenic collection of theoretical positions to justify this existence separate from all other groups. Were a sect to fall into these trends - which some would call economism, workerism, and tailism - they would have almost no immediate political reason to propose a democratic republic, or to carry out democratic struggle. Unless it spontaneously becomes in the (economic or otherwise) interests of 'the working class,' or a social movement emerges centred on abolishing the monarchy/the Senate/making bourgeois democracy more 'representative', the sects have no material motivation to wage democratic struggle as such. They are impotent doubly so - insignificant in size and influence, and bound to a working class that will not spontaneously achieve self-consciousness, waiting for it to do exactly that. Resources are scarce enough as is on the socialist left, why waste them on some political demands that don't immediately inspire, or provoke spontaneous reaction in the Australian population?

> "The slogan of a democratic republic... no longer occupies central stage in the socialist movement's imaginary"

Why does this impotence matter? Because politics matter. Because the struggle for democracy is the struggle for workers' power. Because we cannot rely on economic demands, or social and cultural issues of the day, to cohere an alternative pole of power, to destroy the bourgeois state itself and seize power as such. Because the democratic republic is a representation of the form proletarian state power can take - and implies as such in its definition.

Yet the sect remains useless, as the socialist movement remains useless, based on a fractal splitting and division which is yet to find its resolution. What solution can there be? Well, in the long term, the solution is the programmatic unification of this socialist movement into a communist party - and this party's merger with the workers' movement as such. Such steps would infinitely increase resources and capacity for struggle, democratic or otherwise, and clarifying the importance of democratic struggle as such. In the absence of a spontaneous miracle, the

immediate goals of communists are then to make this argument - to make the case for partyism, for the communist party, to themselves, to each other, to the socialist movement in its entirety. To push relentlessly for this unification, for a program for the communist party, and to win. Simultaneously, the RCO will continue to wage democratic agitation where possible, and continue to make the case for a democratic republic openly and proudly. We invite all other sects to do the same, and welcome their contributions to reviving this struggle existentially important to communism.

# Fatima Payman's sort of party

**Max Jacobi**

*Max Jacobi scathingly reviews what Senator Payman's new project means*

In October 2024, former ALP senator Fatima Payman announced the formation of a new party called "Australia's Voice". For months since she left the ALP, Payman burrowed into the Australian soft-left, organising around the issue of the genocide in Palestine (amongst others). Launching the party website with no listed policies, program or platform does little to inspire confidence in this newest seemingly progressive-left electoral project. With all social media links directing people to Fatima Payman directly, is Australia's Voice nothing more than a personalist vanity project?

From Fatima Payman's statements, it's unclear what kind of direction this new party will take. In a discussion with 7.30, Payman said that Australia's Voice is "going to be about coming together for all Australians". Her glowing praise of Labor's sacred triumvirate (Whitlam, Hawke, and Keating), along with her denunciation of the Greens, presents us with a politically confused left-liberal deciding to form yet another soft-left electoral project that will, in no short order, crash and burn after a single failed election.

Her initial election to the Senate in 2022 was a fluke; she was put forward by Labor as an 'expendable candidate', expected to lose, but struck a shocking victory. It's unclear what Fatima Payman's politics are, and her voting record is a hit-or-miss source as it can be easily deflected as Payman voting for the Party Line (Bureaucratic Centralism dominates in the Labor Party). However, with Payman

Senator Payman launches "Australia's Voice" | Photo: ABC

enthusiastically quoting the arch-white supremacist Robert Menzies (a recent article in The Guardian has her saying "We reject the status quo that serves the powerful and ignores the rest the forgotten people, as Robert Menzies put it."), it may be safe to assume she is not of the Left, which is not surprising.

A deeply economist worldview paired with hollow slogans and a lack of any real policies, platforms or programs paints a grim image of a badly thought out political project centred around a party-hopping glory-hound. It is clear that when Fatima Payman speaks of her party being for 'the disenfranchised', she does not mean the working class: she means disaffected suburban parasites defecting from Labor and the LNP. Once Mrs. Payman remembers that she's running a political party and not a merch store, we may find out what she actually believes in.

# Don't bank on Ayatollahs

Yassamine Mather

*There are those, including on the 'left', who credit the Islamic Republic with being a bulwark of 'anti-imperialism' and potentially the nemesis of Israel and US hegemony, writes Yassamine Mather*

The ongoing genocide of Palestinians has both short-term and long-term consequences for the Middle East and maybe the rest of the world.

One of the most obvious immediate effects of Israel's assault on Gaza has been the collapse of the Abraham Accords. These were a series of treaties aimed at normalising diplomatic relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco, facilitated by the US administration between August and December 2020.

In the span of five months, four Arab states joined Egypt and Jordan in "making peace with Israel".1 The expectation was that Saudi Arabia would also join the accords. They were isolating Iran's Islamic Republic as the rogue 'anti-Israeli' state in the region. The agreements were called the Abraham Accords in honour of Abraham - the mythical patriarch of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

However, the events immediately after October 7 2023 put an end to all this. Some have argued that Hamas's attack on Israel was aimed at stopping the Abraham accord, as well as obtaining the release of a large numbers of prisoners held by Israel. If that was the case, they achieved the first part of their aim. For all practical purposes the Abraham Accords are dead and buried.

No Arab state, however much under pressure by the US and its allies, will be able to admit to the normalisation of relations with the Zionist state openly. Even without such steps, authoritarian states in the region, including the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, are threatened by the growing anger in the streets of their towns and cities. These days any talk of diplomatic relations with Benjamin Netanyahu's genocidal government in Jerusalem would be political suicide.

The second and less talked about consequence of 11 months of uninterrupted killing of tens of thousands of Palestinians, with the direct support of the US and the approval of most of its allies, has taught any country thinking of 'dissing' the hegemon power a bitter lesson: if the US and its allies decide that you should be flattened by bombing and military attacks, there is nothing you can do about it. You might complain to the United Nations, but do not pin any hope of hostilities ending, even if several UN agencies and the secretary general intervene on your behalf. Many countries had learned this lesson after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, the relentless massacre of Palestinians has been a serious reminder of what awaits those who do not follow the US diktat and this includes Iran's Islamic Republic.

There are those, including those on the 'left', who bank on Iran and see it as the leading element in the so-called 'Axis of Resistance'. They picture Iran as a bulwark of 'anti-imperialism' and the potential nemesis of Israel and even US hegemony in the Middle East. This is more than foolish. Not only is Iran no 'anti-imperialist' power, it is determined to secure a deal with imperialism. It longs to end its isolation and once again to be allowed to rejoin the 'international community'.

More than that. As I shall show, Iran is desperately weak according to almost every conceivable index.

## Diplomatic

By early 2024, after a few years of pursuing a policy of rapprochement with China and Russia, Iran's supreme leader decided that the regime could not take the threat of a US attack lightly. He was well aware that the country's military arsenal is old, and in desperate need of upgrade/replacement. He knows that the regime could not survive any US military intervention and furthermore even the Chinese 'Belt and Road' way to economic development depends on the removal of at

Iranian and global officials announce the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, 2015 | Photo: USDS

least some of the western sanctions imposed by the US and its allies.

Signs of this change of heart were present before the accident that killed former president Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister in May. Secret (and not so secret) negotiations with US officials had started in early 2024 and current changes in the Iranian government show a major shift in ayatollah Khamenei's position.

In other words, the lesson from the onslaught in Gaza is felt all over the world, including in Tehran. The message is loud and clear: there is no room for any dissent against US rule. Iran's Islamic Republic continues using slogans about the 'Great Satan', but at the same time, contrary to all false reports about its role in the 'Axis of Resistance', the supreme leader and his newly selected 'reformist' president are pursuing political and economic rapprochement with the west for two obvious reasons:

They are scared of what might happen if they engage in a war with the Zionist state and the US comes to the 'rescue', as promised repeatedly by the Biden administration and echoed by presidential candidates, Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. The US could attempt to bomb the country back into the stone age, not least by using bunker-busters to destroy the precious nuclear industry.

They need the removal of some sanctions for the country's economy to survive.

**Military**

The Iranian airforce is in desperate need of new equipment after decades of international sanctions. The regime has been prevented from accessing the latest advanced military technology. As reported by Reuters:

The airforce only has a few dozen working strike aircraft, including Russian jets and ageing US models acquired before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 ....

Tehran has a squadron of nine F-4 and F-5 fighter jets [bought between 1971 and 1979], one squadron of Russian-made Sukhoi-24 jets, and some MiG-29s, F7 and F14 aircraft .... The Iranians also have pilotless planes designed to fly into targets and explode. Analysts estimate the country's drone arsenal to be in the low thousands.2

Iran has developed at least 10 different models of suicide drones, designed to explode on impact. These drones can be as accurate as ballistic missiles, but with the advantage of flying lower to evade radar detection. Smaller models, such as the Shahed-136, carry approximately 45 kilograms of explosives. One of the smallest models, the Meraj-521, carries only about three kilograms of explosives.

Due to their slower speeds, many of these drones are easier targets for anti-aircraft batteries, fighter jets or missiles. Their operational ranges vary significantly, from as short as five kilometres to as long as 2,500. Iran's largest suicide drones, like those in the Arash series, can carry nearly 260 kilograms of explosives and have ranges of up to 2,000 kilometres. However, both the range and the accuracy of this type of drone were seriously challenged after Iran retaliated against the Israeli attack on its Damascus consulate in April.

In addition to suicide drones, Iran possesses more than a dozen models of combat and surveillance drones, capable of attacking ground, sea or air targets before returning to base. Larger models, such as the Shahed-149, have operational ranges of up to 2,000 kilometres and can carry payloads of up to 500 kilograms. It is also believed that Iran has more than 3,500 surface-to-surface missiles, some of which carry half-ton warheads (the number capable of reaching Israel may be lower).

When it comes to naval power, the combined forces of the Iranian navy and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps patrol the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Although they have been relatively effective in defending Iranian waters, it is unlikely they can do much beyond these coastal zones. In addition, the navy has seven frigates, 49 patrol boats, 31 amphibious ships, 17 auxiliary ships, 19 submarines, and 54 aircraft. Again Iran has no particular naval capabilities to defend itself against the United States and the dispatch of several aircraft carriers to the region over the last few months is mainly aimed at warning Iran.

According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in 2013 the regular Iranian army was estimated to have 357,000 personnel (167,000 conscripts and 190,000 professionals) plus around 350,000 reservists for a total of 700,000 soldiers.

Of course, no-one envisages a land attack on Iran and US generals constantly warn how foolish it would be to launch such an operation: Iran is a big country, approximately four times the size of Iraq, with diverse and challenging terrain, including mountains, deserts and dense urban areas. The Zagros and Alborz mountain ranges, along with the vast Dasht-e Kavir and Dasht-e Lut deserts, create natural defensive barriers that would make large-scale ground operations extremely challenging. Also the country's large size provides it with significant strategic depth, allowing its military forces to disperse and operate from different parts of the country, complicating any invasion plans. Conducting a land invasion would require establishing and maintaining long supply lines across hostile territory.

However, if the US pursues a policy of regime change from above, military occupation on the ground will not be necessary. Destroying the country's infrastructure might lead to the collapse of the current Shia regime. That is why Iran's Islamic Republic has no intention of responding to Israel's successive attempts to draw it into a hot war and the supreme leader aims to avoid an US attack no matter what.

> "Iran's Islamic Republic has no intention of responding to Israel's succesive attempts to draw in into a hot war"

**Economic**

Another reason why Iran is desperate to improve relations with the west relates to the country's economic situation. In his first television interview as the new president, Masoud Pezeshkian said that his government needs more than $100 billion of foreign investment to increase the economic growth from 4% to 8%, but he admitted that solving the economic problems will depend on foreign relations.

He referred to problems such as power cuts and pressure on factories, adding: "What experts and economists say is that we need $200 to $250 billion of investment to achieve 8% economic growth. However, we need investment to achieve growth."

Blaming the previous government for the current deficit, Pezeshkian added: "They said

that we inherited a good economic situation, but we don't have enough. I don't want to complain, but we got permission from the leadership to take some amount from the national fund and settle some debts."

One of the most pressing structural issues facing Iran in recent years has been the significant deterioration of its economic and civil infrastructure.

In a recent interview with Entekhab, a reformist website, economist Amirhossein Khaleghi highlighted the severe challenges in maintaining critical services operational, pointing to a lack of electricity and a shortage of gas as key examples. Khaleghi noted that the sanctions have had a profoundly negative impact on these sectors, leading to power cuts in the summer and issues with providing heating in the winter.

Bourgeois economists inside and outside Iran have given the same message for the last few years. They state that domestic laws have to be adapted to the 'rules and standards' of the Financial Action Task Force so as to remove obstacles to trade and foreign investment.

**Sanctions**

The latest round of US sanctions began in November 2018. The White House was adamant they were not aimed at regime change, rather at compelling Iran to alter its regional policies, cease its support for "militant groups" and "end its ballistic missile programme". However, the close relations between the Trump administration, Israel and their well-financed exile stooges did point to sanctions aimed at triggering 'regime change from above'.

In September 2019, a US official announced that sanctions would be imposed on anyone engaging in trade with Iran or purchasing its oil. That same month, following a suspected Iranian attack on key Saudi Arabian oil facilities, Trump instructed the treasury department to "substantially increase" sanctions on Iran, with a focus on the national bank. A senior Trump administration official later indicated that these new sanctions specifically targeted the financial assets of the supreme leader's inner circle. However, Tehran denied any involvement in the attacks on the Saudi oil facilities, according to The

Economic deterioration has wracked Iran | Photo: Rasanah

New York Times, and in August 2020 the UN security council blocked the US attempt to re-impose 'snapback sanctions' on Iran.

In September 2020 the US claimed that UN sanctions against Iran were reinstated - a position rejected by Iran and the other remaining parties to the JCPOA nuclear agreement. The following day, the US imposed sanctions on Iranian defence officials, nuclear scientists, the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, and anyone involved in conventional arms deals with the country. Then in October of that year the US expanded its sanctions on Iran's financial sector, targeting 18 Iranian banks.

In February 2023, the German state-owned broadcaster, Deutsche Welle, reported that the pressure on Iran had diplomatic costs for Washington and could ultimately lead to an increase in oil prices, in light of the rise in Iran's oil exports. It is assumed that this prompted the Biden administration's latest moves in terms of the relaxation of sanctions regarding Iranian oil sales.

However, the basic effects of the sanctions have contributed to a wide range of adverse macroeconomic effects, including sharp currency devaluation, severe trade and fiscal deficits, high inflation and increasing poverty rates. Successive Iranian governments have struggled to effectively counter the economic pressures resulting from these sanctions.

The EU has also imposed sanctions against Iran in response to its human rights abuses, nuclear proliferation activities and military support for Russia's war efforts in Ukraine.

In 2011, the EU introduced a series of sanctions in response to what it called "serious

The US announces new sanctions on Iran | Photo: USDS

human rights violations" in the country. The restrictive measures have been renewed annually since then and were last extended in April 2024. Since October 2022, the EU has drastically increased restrictive measures, adopting 10 packages of sanctions.

There is no doubt that there are "serious human rights violations" in Iran's Islamic Republic. However, it is debatable whether they are worse than those in pro-western authoritarian regimes in the Middle East or the apartheid, colonial-settler state in Israel, all of whom benefit from EU political and financial support.

The combined EU and US sanctions have significantly impacted Iran's logistics infrastructure, exacerbating existing challenges, while also imposing new hurdles. Below is a general overview of how sanctions have affected Iran:

1. Shipping and maritime trade: There are shipping line restrictions: major companies like Maersk and the Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) have scaled back or stopped operations in Iran due to sanctions, complicating international goods transport for the country and driving up costs and transit times.

Many shipping firms avoid transporting Iranian goods due to sanction risks, leading to increased costs. Moreover, international insurers often refuse to cover vessels that dock in Iran, further isolating the country from global trade networks.

The sanctions have also resulted in increased congestion at Iranian ports. With fewer shipping options available, bottlenecks form, causing delays in importing essential goods, including food and medicine.

2. Aviation sector challenges: There is limited access to aircraft parts. Sanctions have drastically reduced Iran's ability to acquire spare parts and modern aircraft, causing airlines like Iran Air to struggle with maintenance, leading to flight cancellations and reduced options for both domestic and international travel.

There is reduced international connectivity: Many airlines have discontinued their routes to and from Iran, further isolating the country. This impacts both passenger travel and the transport of goods.

3. Road and Rail Transportation: Foreign investment in Iran's transportation infrastructure has been stifled by sanctions. Modernisation projects for roads and rail systems have been delayed or abandoned, reducing the efficiency of the logistics network.

There have been increased operational costs. The reliance on outdated vehicles and infrastructure has led to higher maintenance costs and decreased efficiency for trucking companies, which are crucial for domestic logistics.

4. Supply chain disruptions: Sanctions have driven up the costs of importing goods, disrupting supply chains. Businesses face higher prices for raw materials, which increases production costs and ultimately raises prices for consumers.

Sanctions have led to a significant rise in illicit trade and smuggling. While this may temporarily ease shortages, it weakens the formal economy and can introduce non-standard or substandard products into the market, often resulting in enriching every section of the regime targeted by sanctions.

5. Technological isolation: Sanctions have limited Iran's access to modern logistics technologies and software that could optimise inventory control and transportation efficiency. This has hampered the development of a competitive logistics sector.

Iran has attempted to develop home-grown alternatives, but these often fall short of

international standards, reducing overall efficiency and reliability.

6. Economic consequences: We have seen both inflation and an economic downturn. There have been shifts in trade relations. Sanctions have prompted Iran to strengthen ties with non-western countries, particularly in Asia.

**Ecology**

A recent article in Eurasia Review entitled 'Did sanctions cause Iran's environmental problems?' explores the multifaceted environmental challenges facing Iran, primarily focusing on the severe water crisis, agricultural practices, pollution, and air quality issues. This is my understanding of the situation.

Iran is experiencing a severe water shortage, driven by rapid population growth, mismanagement and unsustainable agricultural practices that consume over 90% of the country's water. Despite frequent droughts and decreasing water resources, agricultural expansion has continued, relying heavily on non-renewable groundwater.

The drying up of critical water bodies, like Lake Urmia and other wetlands, has been exacerbated by dam construction and water diversion for agriculture. Water quality has deteriorated due to pollution from the agricultural runoff, industrial waste and untreated sewage. Key water bodies like the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf are suffering from high pollution levels.

Deforestation is increasing due to urbanisation, overgrazing and illegal logging, contributing to soil erosion and desertification, and diminishing biodiversity.

Air pollution in urban areas, especially Tehran, is severe, driven by factors such as urbanisation, reliance on low-quality fuels and an ageing vehicle fleet. Cities like Zabol have ranked among the world's most polluted due to dust storms and other such sources. Economic costs associated with air pollution, such as for healthcare and lost productivity, are substantial, with Tehran's air pollution estimated to cost around $2.6 billion annually.

The adverse impacts of international sanctions on Iran's methanol and oil industries illustrate how these restrictions have led to suboptimal technological choices and significant environmental degradation. Despite having the potential to become a leading methanol producer, Iran's access to modern technologies has been hampered. Companies like JM and Haldor Topsoe have refused to provide critical auto-thermal reforming technology for Iranian refineries, forcing Iran to use outdated methods that result in higher water consumption and carbon emissions. For example, the Eslamabad-e Gharb refinery is being launched with older technologies, while neighbouring Turkmenistan successfully operates a state-of-the-art methanol plant. In another case, Haldor Topsoe failed to deliver the necessary equipment for a methanol project, leading to the use of local alternatives that did not meet environmental standards.

The consequences of projects like the oil extraction in Hur Al-Azim, where original designs for wetland drilling were ignored, have resulted in significant ecological damage and increased dust storms badly affecting the local population. The imposition of sanctions in 2010 on gasoline imports further exacerbated these environmental issues. While Iran managed to increase its local refining capacity, the quality of the domestically produced petrol was severely compromised, with high levels of contaminants. This shift illustrates Iran's response to sanctions, prioritising short-term survival over long-term environmental health.

Additionally, Iran's pursuit of self-sufficiency in food production as a national security measure has led to increased environmental degradation due to unsustainable agricultural practices. Iranian leaders view food dependency as a vulnerability. Consequently, similar policies promoting self-sufficiency in other sectors, like car manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, have been adopted, despite their long-term costs to the environment. The overarching consequence is the tension between national security concerns under sanctions and the resulting environmental degradation.

***This article was originally published in the Weekly Worker***

# Why can't anyone stop Netanyahu?

Netenyahu speaks to the UN | Photo: NPR

**Spartacist Editors**

In the year since October 7, the infernal Zionist machine has massacred tens of thousands of Palestinians. Now through continuous escalation it threatens a major regional war. In April, Israel bombed the Iranian embassy in Syria, in July it assassinated Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Teheran, and since then it has engaged in an offensive against Hezbollah, exploding thousands of pagers, killing its leaders—including Hasan Nasrallah—and raiding southern Lebanon. In response to Israel's crimes, millions have demonstrated, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened an investigation and Iran and Hezbollah have shot missiles at Israel. However, nothing seems to deter Israel's escalation.

Part of the explanation is that Netanyahu's government of butchers and fanatics is clear on its objective: the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the river to the sea. The obstacle it confronts is that over the past decades Iran has gradually eroded Israel's military dominance in the region. Not only has Iran developed advanced weaponry, including the technology for nuclear weapons, but it has also taken advantage of disastrous U.S. wars in the region to consolidate a network of powerful militias. These developments are viewed as existential threats to Israel's Zionist project.

Now the Zionist right sees a historic opportunity to deal a crippling blow to Iran. Israel's population has been marshaled into a genocidal frenzy since October 7, its international reputation is already destroyed, and the U.S. promises unconditional support. In this context, Netanyahu thinks that by continuously escalating the conflict he can either secure a major capitulation from Iran and its allies or drag the U.S. into a direct war with the Islamic Republic. In either case, he hopes to ensure unopposed expansion into remaining Palestinian land and the long-term defense of Israel's borders.

However, the question remains: "Why can't anyone stop Netanyahu?" In some cases, the answer is obvious. The U.S. may not currently see a war with Iran as desirable, but this is entirely secondary to its commitment to defend Israel no matter what. Even if Biden were not senile, the lack of political determination to stop Israel's aggression would remain. As for the governments of Britain, Germany, France, Japan and other advanced "democracies," they are sycophants committed to upholding the U.S. world order even if it leads to the devastation of their own economies. They are not about to put up a fuss.

But what about the forces opposing Israel, such as Iran? Or the millions who have demonstrated against the genocide in Gaza? Why haven't they been able to stop the bloody spiral in West Asia? Here we must not only look at the balance of military force but also examine the political outlook of the various oppositions to Netanyahu. As we shall see, the real reason his government hasn't been stopped is that its opponents lack a bold and coherent program to defeat Zionism and throw off imperialist domination of the region.

### The Ayatollah's Choice: Capitulation or Jihad?

First, we must look at the Axis of Resistance led by Iran, which includes Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yemen. Unlike most other Muslim regimes that condemn Israel in speeches while remaining aligned with the U.S. in practice, the Iranian regime and its allies have directly confronted Israel, including by launching missiles onto its territory. That said, displays

of force like that of October 1 do not prove that the Axis of Resistance is committed to Palestinian liberation, nor that it has any sort of coherent plan to defeat Israel or more importantly the U.S. In fact, the truth is quite the opposite.

The overriding priority of the Iranian rulers is the preservation of the theocratic Shia regime. Since it was established by overthrowing the Shah, a U.S. puppet, the regime has been in continuous conflict with imperialist interests in the region. At the same time, the theocratic and capitalist nature of the regime limits Iran's ability to push back and defeat imperialism by uniting the peoples of West Asia in a common struggle.

The regime's problems start with Iran's own people, many of whom hate living under the whip of Islamic law and the mullahs. Women in particular are denied the most basic democratic rights, including that of deciding how to dress. Iran also includes different nationalities and religious groups which suffer repression and a denial of national rights. These internal tensions were on full display in the 2022 social explosion that occurred after the death in police custody of Jina Amini.

This tense internal situation means that whatever threat comes from the imperialists and Israel it must be balanced with stabilizing the domestic front, which in many ways appears more dangerous to the ruling clerics. This explains why in the midst of Israel's genocide in Gaza the Ayatollah allowed Masoud Pezeshkian to run for president and get elected on a platform of pacifying the West. This was not a u-turn but a logical outcome of the proclaimed doctrine of "strategic patience" in regard to Israel. The reformist wing of the regime thinks that if it can avoid a direct confrontation with Israel and obtain economic concessions from the West, then it will be able to reduce internal tensions and secure the stability of the regime.

The reformers are conscious that the price of such concessions is to stab the Palestinians and their other allies in the back. In late September, even as Israel was actively decapitating Hezbollah—Iran's main ally in the region—President Pezeshkian was in New York making appeals to reopen the 2015 nuclear negotiations. The shocking inaction at Israel's aggression against Lebanon was justified by a regime insider quoted in the Financial Times (26 September) saying that "inevitably, some important issues are being set aside for more urgent ones, at least temporarily. This is the price you pay when you adjust your approach in battle."

There is, of course, another wing of the ruling class—the so-called "hard-liners" who want to impose a more draconian religious order internally and pursue a more confrontational course against Israel. It is indeed possible that in a long attritional war with Israel and the U.S., Iran could come out on top. But this would come at a terrible price and at great risk to the regime.

Of course, the U.S. and Israel are very powerful militarily. But in addition to this is the fact that Iran's war effort would be hampered by its religious character. Given the nature of the Islamic Republic, any war would largely be based on Shia sectarianism. On this basis it is impossible to unite the peoples of the entire region against imperialism and Zionism. Such a war would alienate much of West Asia and make it easy for the enemy—and the Sunni regimes hostile to the Shia—to foster religious and national conflicts among the various oppressed groups. This consideration makes a war with Israel much more costly and its outcome much more uncertain for the ruling clerics.

Lebanon provides a good illustration of the problem. The French colonialists consciously built Lebanon along sectarian lines in order to pit the various religious groups against each other and maintain their rule. But instead of overcoming such divisions and striving to unite Sunni, Shia and Christian against imperialism and Israel, Iran has focused its efforts on building Hezbollah, a militia based on the Shia community. This means that in any conflict with Israel, Hezbollah must not only confront the external foe but also balance relations with other religious groups in Lebanon. This consideration is certainly an important factor in Hezbollah's restraint since October 7.

Clearly neither Hezbollah nor Iran is confident in their ability to confront Israel at the current time. In recent weeks, Netanyahu was able to exploit the indecision and wavering of his adversaries to devastating effect. Israel succeeded in decapitating Hezbollah's leadership and exposed Iran as an unreliable ally. Facing humiliation, the Iranian regime finally responded by shooting a salvo of 180 ballistic missiles at Israel. Now the initiative is

Israeli rockets strike Iranian military targets | Photo: AFP

back in the hands of Israel, which will decide whether it wants to further escalate the conflict.

One must keep in mind that it is by no means assured that an all-out war in the Middle East would see the position of the U.S. and Israel strengthened—in fact, quite the contrary is likely. That said, for Palestinian liberation and working-class emancipation to be advanced one cannot count on the Axis of Resistance. Instead, what is required is a program that is intransigent in its opposition to imperialism and that can unite the peoples of the Middle East. The pillars of such a program must be:

Defend Gaza, the West Bank, Yemen, Lebanon and Iran against Zionist and imperialist attacks!

National liberation of Palestine, and recognition of full national rights, including self-determination for all nations!

No state religion, no imposition of the veil!

Nationalize the property of the imperialists and their domestic stooges!

### Liberal Zionism: Reactionary and Impotent

Despite the wishful thinking of the ideologues of the Axis of Resistance, Israel is not a paper tiger. It will not collapse if its narrative gets exposed or if it suffers economic blows—even severe ones. The two pillars of Israel's strength are the support it receives from the U.S. and the existence of a consolidated Jewish nation on the territory of Palestine. This means that even if it were possible to inflict a disastrous military defeat on Israel, which would put its very existence into question, there is no doubt that the Zionists would be able to inflict catastrophic destruction and that much of the Israeli population would fight to the bitter end for their national existence. Militarily confronting the entire Israeli nation guarantees the maximum resistance and destruction. For this reason, if one is serious about Palestinian liberation, one must have a strategy to undermine Israel's national unity and break an important segment of the population from Zionism.

The past few years have shown that there are indeed important fissures within Israel. The tensions within Israel reflect the country's inexorable slide toward becoming a totalitarian militarized theocracy, even for Jews. This trajectory goes to show that a society founded on national oppression not only degrades the oppressed—in this case the Palestinians—but also drags the oppressing nation into barbarity.

Both the 2023 mass demonstrations against Netanyahu's anti-democratic judicial reform and the more recent demonstrations demanding a ceasefire to free the hostages in Gaza were movements based on the liberal wing of the Zionist ruling class. This pole of Israeli society pushes back against the most bellicose and theocratic facets of government

policy while at the same time being fully committed to Zionism, that is, to the national oppression of the Palestinians. This gives liberal Zionism a reactionary character. It also means that it is totally impotent in confronting the right wing of Israeli society.

The logic of Zionism is such that the most rabid and confrontational faction of the ruling class will always be more consistent than those who drape themselves in high-minded ideals while continuing to defend the historic crime of Palestinian dispossession. The bankruptcy of liberal Zionist movements is shown clearly by the fact that they evaporate the minute Israel's national defense is posed in any kind of serious way. After October 7, some of Netanyahu's strongest opponents rushed to join his government of national unity. And following Israel's offensives against Lebanon, the movement to free the hostages immediately worked to demobilize itself. The basic fact is that there can be no serious opposition to Netanyahu's band of fanatics without a political break with Zionism and a defense of Palestinian liberation.

There do exist in Israel small forces that stand against Palestinian oppression. However, while they face intense repression, they fail to confront the obstacle that liberal Zionism represents. In the case of groups such as the Internationalist Socialist League (affiliated with the RCIT), the argument is that because Israel is a settler-colonial state, basically nothing can be done now to break the Israeli working class from Zionism. For them the task is simply to stand in liberal solidarity with the Palestinians without seeking to affect Israeli society. Then there are the likes of Socialist Struggle (affiliated with the ISA), which cheer on liberal Zionist movements. For example, they hailed the one-day general strike in early September while raising no opposition to Zionism and sweeping under the rug the fact that it was organized by a labor bureaucracy entirely committed to the national oppression of the Palestinians. In both cases, there is an unwillingness or incapacity to confront workers' deeply entrenched Zionist beliefs.

To crack Israeli society, it is essential to go beyond the ideas in the heads of individuals and look at the material interests of the various classes. While Israel does benefit from a higher standard of living due to its role as the imperialists' thug in the region, conditions for Israeli workers—including Jewish workers—are not good. Palestinian oppression does not benefit Jewish workers—it drags them down by making them powerless to defend their own interests against patriotic bosses and rulers. It also turns them into enforcers of the barbaric oppression of Palestinians, threatening their lives and that of their families and degrading their own humanity.

The key to unlocking these contradictions is to undermine Zionism with a program directed against both its right wing and its liberal wing.

Full democratic rights for all Palestinians from the river to the sea—Israeli workers will never be free as long as Palestinians are oppressed.

Break the connection with the U.S.—serving as the agents of imperialism will never bring safety.

Redistribute capitalist land and wealth to workers and Palestinians.

**Hara-Kiri for Harris**

To stop the Israeli onslaught, it is essential to stop the flow of weapons from the West, centrally from the U.S. Over the past year, there have been countless pro-Palestinian demonstrations and even a short-lived but militant student movement against the genocide in Gaza. However, in the past few weeks the movement in the U.S. has to a large degree liquidated itself in order to avoid damaging the electoral prospects of Kamala Harris, who everyone knows is entirely committed to defending Israel.

Nothing symbolizes the current impasse more than the pathetic "uncommitted" movement. A few months ago, it encouraged Democratic Party primary voters to write "uncommitted" on their ballots as a pressure tactic on the party leadership. Although thousands followed the movement's lead, it predictably achieved nothing and was shoved to the curb by the Democrats. The movement was even denied its miserable demand of having a single Palestinian speaker—no matter which one—address the Chicago Democratic convention. Now, after weeks of groveling and nothing to show for their efforts, the uncommitted movement declined to endorse Harris, advocating instead to vote against Trump...but not for a third party—i.e., to vote for Harris.

This lamentable spectacle—cheered at every step by most of the left—goes a long way to explain why the Palestinian movement in the West has been so ineffective in wresting the slightest concession, much less stopping arms shipments. Instead of building a working-class opposition to both parties of U.S. imperialism, as each competes to be more Zionist than the other, the movement has sought to pull the Democratic Party toward the side of Palestine. The absurdity of this strategy is shown by the fact that even Palestinian American congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, who has attracted the ire of the entire U.S. media and establishment, has remained in the Democratic Party despite its support to genocide. This shows that it is not the Palestinian movement that has influenced the Democratic Party but that the movement has sacrificed itself for the Democrats.

"It is not the Palestinian movement that has influenced the Democratic Party but that the movement has sacrificed itself for the Democrats"

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Boeing Machinists and ILA longshoremen have engaged in strike action. Even though the ILA criminally continued to ship weapons, the strikes certainly caused more disruption for U.S. arms manufacturers than all the campus occupations combined. The problem is that the pro-Palestinian movement is utterly incapable of connecting with these workers, many of whom hate the liberal establishment to their bones and would rather vote Trump. At best, liberal activists make a moral case to workers as to why they should support Palestine; at worst they treat conservative workers with contempt and as "part of the problem."

What liberals miss is the basic point that it is not in the interest of American workers to ship missiles that cause death and chaos around the world. It is the children of American workers who will be the first ones sent to kill and be killed for the profits of U.S. imperialism. Many workers instinctively know that the increased insecurity and precarity they face in their daily lives has much to do with America's forever wars. Instead of kowtowing to the very party committing genocide and breaking strikes, and instead of trying to peddle liberal drivel to the working class, the pro-Palestinian movement must seek to connect the Palestinian cause to that of working-class emancipation in the U.S. itself.

Stop arms shipments to Israel! U.S. crimes abroad will come at the expense of workers at home.

For black liberation, for Palestinian liberation!

Oppose Democrats and Republicans! For a Workers Party—Vote PSL!

**Where Are the BRICS?**

An effective alliance is one in which the whole is stronger than the sum of its parts. The BRICS+ bloc is precisely the opposite. When it comes to Palestine, or any other great geopolitical conflict for that matter, it is utterly irrelevant. The problem is that each member country has vastly different and often conflicting interests. On the question of the war in Gaza, for example, you have one member state, Iran, which is in direct conflict with Israel. And then you have India, which has close relations with Israel and is ruled by a chauvinist anti-Muslim party. Clearly, when it comes to Palestine the BRICS+ as a bloc will not play any kind of independent role.

But what about the other big countries that compose this bloc, such as Russia and China? Russia has been providing a degree of military support to Iran, including air defense batteries. However, Russia seems more intent on avoiding a regional escalation than advancing the cause of Palestinian liberation. Ultimately, despite the hue and cry about Russian imperialism, there are no signs that Russia is trying to make use of the situation to push U.S. influence out of the region. Rather, Russia is focused on finishing the war in Ukraine and eventually reaching a settlement with the U.S. over Europe's future security architecture.

And China? Surely a regime claiming to be communist would provide material support to the Palestinian resistance as the Soviet Union did for the Palestine Liberation Organization. Ha! Beyond empty gestures and pacifist

platitudes, the Communist Party (CPC) has not lifted a finger for the Palestinian cause. This is true despite the fact that Palestinian liberation and the expulsion of American power from West Asia would go a long way toward reducing the threat China faces from the U.S. in East Asia. The CPC is too busy cozying up to the worst Gulf autocrats and Israeli capitalists to pay any attention to anti-imperialism and national liberation struggles, not to speak of worldwide proletarian revolution.

Of all the original BRICS countries, South Africa has probably done the most to signal that it morally stands with Palestine. To much fanfare, it brought a case against Israel for genocide at the ICC. The result? Nothing, of course. The ICC is only intended to target fallen African dictators and enemies of the U.S. This empty show of force had much more to do with shoring up Ramaphosa and the ANC's left flank before the recent elections than with any serious commitment to Palestinian liberation. In fact, right after the elections President Ramaphosa jumped into a coalition with the rabidly Zionist heirs of the apartheid regime. It is certainly not from this government that Palestine will get any assistance.

Does this mean that the situation is hopeless? Far from it. One does not need to praise the BRICS to accept that America's grip on the world is getting weaker. Billions of workers and oppressed have only misery and war to expect from the U.S. and its crumbling order. Once you stop putting faith in the rotten regimes that conciliate and support the status quo, it becomes clear that there is huge potential in uniting the victims of U.S. imperialism around the world—from Palestine to Mexico to the Philippines and in the U.S. itself.

For an anti-imperialist front against Israel and the U.S.

Nationalize all imperialist assets and cancel the debts!

No illusions in BRICS—Workers of the world, unite!

**What Next?**

The situation is bleak. Every day more Palestinians are killed by the IDF and hundreds of thousands face starvation and disease. In the West Bank more Palestinian land is stolen. Israel now shows every sign of wanting to turn Lebanon into a new Gaza and to bomb Iran into submission. Whether it will succeed in this is another matter. However, if the last year has shown one thing, it is that there is no place for fatuous optimism. The UN, the international community, the ICC, the BRICS, the Muslim regimes—none will come to the Palestinians' rescue. It is time to face the hard reality and draw lessons from the disastrous results of the past 12 months. The current leaders of the Palestinian resistance are not up to the task. Nor is the pro-Palestinian movement internationally.

Israeli forces target a non-profit in Lebanon | Photo: Amnesty

Communists and socialists have little currency in the Arab world, not least because they have so far failed to provide a road forward for genuine national liberation (see "Marxists & Palestine: 100 Years of Failure," Spartacist No. 69). However, every day it becomes clearer that the forces of political Islam do not have an answer either. This provides an opening for the workers movement to enter the fray on the side of the Palestinians and provide an alternative.

The task at hand is to fuse the domestic struggles of workers internationally with that of Palestinian liberation. This will be possible only if there is a struggle against the bankrupt road offered by the labor bureaucrats, liberals and conciliators who have called the shots so far. It is the urgent responsibility of all socialists, working-class militants and Palestinian activists to start debating and organizing this struggle for a new course. We cannot allow this next year to be like the last.

***This article initially published in Spartacist. Views may not represent those of Partisan or the RCO.***

# Mourn for the dead, revolt for the living

Brunhilda Olding

*Editor Brunhilda Olding reflects on Trans Day of Remembrance and agitates for a Communist road forward*

The current estimate of deaths for the 2024 observance period by the Trans Day of Remembrance Project is 305. If this extrapolation is accurate this would be the lowest number of reports since 2016. In some ways this year may be one where we need to mourn less. Yet this is only chiselling away at the top of the iceberg. How many Palestinians slaughtered by the current Zionist offensive were our siblings? How many trans workers lie rotting in the fields of Sudan? How many have been murdered or assaulted in back-alley streets? How many have taken their own life without ever being able to reach out to the world?

It seems that the brief advance in acceptance and rights that were secured for Trans people is already being undermined as the neoliberal framework cracks under its own weight. In the United States both parties have bent to the point of throwing Trans people under the bus for cheap political points as the reactionary media drums up a culture war to disrupt the attempt to form a class one. In the United Kingdom the Labour Party looks set to implement the Cass Review, a naked assault against Trans youth and workers. Reactionaries of every stripe and hue decry

alQaws marches in Haifa | Photo: Twitter

Trans people as perverts and molesters hellbent on destroying western civilisation.

Here in Australia, we have Albanese rescind Queers from the census in a shamefaced display of the bigotry that lurks at the heart of Laborite ideology. This desperate attempt to consolidate the social order comes at the same time as crackdowns against the illusionary democratic rights granted by the 'Australian' state to its citizens to illuminate their displeasure against the actions of the government, and the nakedly corporatist attempt to secure control over the CFMEU. The crucial role of the capitalist state as the maintainer of the capitalist social order, requires that it tries and upholds the bourgeois social order. A crucial pillar of neoliberal capitalism is the heterosexual family form, and as acceptance of Trans people rise one of the key financial backbones of the capitalist order is increasingly undermined.

The liberal offensive has forced us to shift into defensive posturing while forcing the framing of the debate onto the terms that allows for the liberal framework to maintain its strength. For all the many flaws of the Spartacist League their article in their British Newspaper Workers Hammer #252 called quite bluntly 'Let Trans Kids Decide' hits the nail on the head on how the liberals understand and argue around this issue. A defensive posture around the illusory framework of bourgeois rights cannot and never will lead to liberation. This strategy rests on the false principle that the easing of life in bourgeois society will lead towards our liberation. As important and often life-saving as it is to smooth the barriers to getting on hormones, or the right self-declaration is, they are not enough. By

Rioters confront police at Stonewall, 1969 | Photo: NYDN

remaining within the bourgeois framework, and implicitly defending the

This is at best an illusion that drains our energy and weakens our ability to organise, and at worst is an actively damaging strategy. The various socialist sects which try to trail the moment with their demands for Trans rights reveal the bankruptcy of the current socialist movement. The fight for Trans rights, is not in of itself a fight for socialism, yet the fight for Trans Liberation is, and our strategy must operate as such. This is not however to call for the erasure of the nature of the Trans struggle or the subordination of Trans comrades to a cisgender-dominated Central Committee in one of the myriads of sects running around the Australian or indeed international left.

The strategy of Trans workers must be unerringly revolutionary, resolutely militant, and uncompromisingly democratic. Any attempts to defer our fight to others or self-proclaimed leaders will simply see us lose.

Yet we will win liberation, not only ours, but that of the entire working class. The world today may roar that all is horrible, it may point to the slaughters unravelling across the world and proclaim that things will only get worse. That the hope for liberation has failed. The world seems to proclaim to us death to hope, death to love, death to faith, and death to you. That this is the future, the world will only get worse from here.

Yet we say back to the world. You are simply the present. Comrades, in the face of this present we cannot simply reuse the slogans and cries of the past. We mourn the dead, and we will continue to do so every day of our lives, and we have fought like hell for the living. But this is no longer enough.

We must mourn for the dead, and we must revolt for the living. We must raise our standards of revolution on every barricade and proclaim to the world that we will not take this any longer. The working class must unite, and it must fight for the total liberation of humanity. Liberation from capitalism, liberation from the bourgeois sexual and gender norms, liberation from racism, and oppression.

We must have revolution within our lifetime, we must crush the fascists, capitalists, and liberals that stand against us.

**Mourn for the Dead! Revolt for the Living!**

**Queer Liberation is class struggle!**

**Workers and Queers unite for liberation!**

**Forward to Communism!**

# Marx and the Commune

Maxine

*Comrade Maxine reflects on the evolving ideas of Marx on the Democratic Republic*

Most Marxists today, when asked what working class rule will actually look like, quite stubbornly refuse to answer. In Marx's early writing, he was like this too. He avoided the question of political form quite explicitly, as in the actual constitution and rules of the revolutionary state. He argued that the particular form of workers' rule must emerge from objective material conditions rather than the subjective arguments of intellectuals.

With the uprising of Parisian workers in 1871, Marx's views on this shifted. Marx did not exactly declare the constitution of the Paris Commune the absolute and one-and-only form that the proletariat-in-power must take. Nonetheless, Marx argued that the political form of the Commune was an expression of the political content of the working class. Despite its flaws, which Marx pointed out, it put the workers in power. It expressed the character of the working class as an international class, whose aims are to abolish capitalism.

Why did Marx do this? What was the Commune really like? What actually changed in Marx's thought because of the commune? Why is this important for Marxists today?

**The Manifesto**

The culmination of the pre-commune period of Marx's ideas is the Manifesto of the Communist Party, which formed the foundation of Marxist thought. We find familiar notions here where Marx outlines, in simple terms, the contradictions inherent to the industrial mode of production. This mode of production has, or is in the inevitable process of completing, the reduction of the entire world into two opposing classes – the bourgeoisie (the owners of private property and the means of production) and the proletariat (those who perform labour and own nothing but their capacity for labour). This mode of production, and the revolutions enacted by the bourgeoisie to establish it, have swept away all previous classes, status relations, and privileges.

However, in doing so, it has unified all the past working classes into one single class with one enemy. The industrial mode of production, by taking the means of production away from the petty producers, has turned production into a process encompassing all of society rather than individual endeavour, a contradiction with the centralisation of private property under capitalism. Marx also outlines other contradictions, such as the tendency of this mode of production to overproduce and then crash.

Essentially, Marx's thesis is that capitalism spells its own doom by socialising production to the extent that private ownership becomes irrational and unnecessary, and creating a class (the proletariat) that then seeks the abolition of private property. This process, if achieved, would be the proletariat abolishing itself. Thus, Marx claims that the proletariat is the only revolutionary class, as it is the only class that seeks its own destruction, and the destruction of all classes, rather than its perpetuation as a class.

Not only does the proletariat seek its own abolition, but the conditions of industrial production develop its capacity to do so. By destroying all past distinctions between workers, by confining them all into factories where they can develop ideas collectively, and by expanding this mode of production across the entire planet – capitalism has given the workers the chance to organise collectively in a manner previously impossible.

For Marx, both as a necessity, and as a natural outcome of the relations of workers in the system of production itself, emerged the communist party. The party arises from the most conscious sections of the proletariat and aims to represent their interests as a whole –

The Paris Commune in 1871 | Photo: History Today

as in, agitating for a revolution which overthrows the bourgeoisie and installs the proletariat to ruling political power. From there, the proletariat can abolish itself by taking management of the entire economy away from the bourgeoisie and into the state under a "common plan". As Marx argues that states are simply an extension of enforcing class rule, the revolutionary state led by the communist party will "wither away" with the destruction of the bourgeoisie, and thus the proletariat, as a class and thus the destruction of all classes.

However, Marx makes no attempt to describe the specific form that this revolutionary state will or should take, and instead focuses solely on its content, the qualitative relationship between the proletariat, the communist party, and the state. The party is the culmination of the interests of the working class, the revolutionary state is a tool for abolishing classes, and the party works as a vanguard for the proletariat within the state. The Manifesto does contain Marx's guess at what most communist parties will seek to immediately achieve on conquering power, setting the stage for later Marxist's minimum-maximum style of party program (where "minimum" is the immediate aims of the party in power and the "maximum" is the full achievement of communism)., but this is as specific as it gets.

Prior to the Commune, Marx posits no vision for what form the constitutions of proletarian dictatorships should take. Indeed, Marx explicitly argues against doing so: political forms should arise from the material conditions of a given situation, which are context-dependent, rather than the idealistic imaginations of socialist thinkers.. Essentially, discussing form is idealism, it isn't a materialist matter of discussion for Marx at this stage.

### Marx in Transition

In The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx gives a historical play-by-play of the revolution in which Louis Bonaparte subverted the newly created national assembly and installed himself as emperor of France. Although Marx's commitment to avoiding discussion of political forms remains, he points out how the form of the new republic allows the bourgeoisie to maintain power. He argues that the bourgeois form of government is characterised by constitutionalism (the raising up of some laws above others, unchangeable by simple majority vote), the separation of powers (the division of the state into its legislative and executive functions), and limit of the voting franchise. These are the mechanisms by which the bourgeoisie limits democracy and the influence of the proletariat over the state. Constitutionalism inhibits

democracy by blunting the extent to which popular majorities can remake the state and claim power for themselves against bourgeois factions or parties. This allows the bourgeoisie to rule despite lacking majority control of the state. Marx saw the separation of powers as mimicking royal prerogative, allowing the apparatus of the state to avoid direct democratic accountability either through ministerial responsibilities or by combining executive power into a president.

Underlying these critiques is a view that true democracy is the representation of the whole against the particular or minority: constitutionalism allows certain laws to continue existing even if the majority disagrees with them, and the separation of powers confines certain state functions to particular individuals with particular interests. This is linked with Marx's claims that the strength of the working class, and its vanguard in the communist party, is its unifying common interest as an entire class, in contrast with the previous social order of privileges and interests which divided the working classes. Indeed, Marx makes the argument that the bourgeoisie are using the vestiges of old aristocratic forms of government to continue its rule.The bourgeoisie had realised that cementing its own rule against the aristocracy would, in fact, allow the proletariat to destroy it soon after .This is the first time Marx makes a connection between the content of the proletariat as a class and the political form of the state as a tool of class rule. The bourgeoisie protects itself using certain political forms to countervail the inherent character of the proletariat and maintain control of the state. Perhaps the proletariat would have to do so also?

Following this argument to its conclusion, Marx makes the first beginnings of a vision for the political form of the social revolution out of his rejections of the political forms of the status quo. Whereas Marx left out the specifics of the seizure of state power in the Manifesto, here Marx argues that overcoming the bourgeoisie requires not just the seizing of control of the pre-existing state apparatus, but also "smashing" it. The political forms of bourgeois rule must be replaced rather than simply deployed. However, Marx does not yet formulate what exactly should replace this apparatus once smashed. That is, until the Commune.

**Marx and the Commune**

Whereas previously Marx refused to envision a positive form of the social revolution, Marx finds the definitive "positive form" of the social revolution in the Commune. In The Civil War in France, Marx engages with the specific form of the constitution of the Commune and congratulates the communards on the forms of their revolutionary state: a single popular assembly combining the executive and legislative functions, the abolition of the bureaucracy and popular administration, and yearly elections of recallable delegates with bound mandates. In this model, Marx finds the negation of the political forms of bourgeois rule which he previously criticised.

In the article Revolutionary Commune, Korsch makes the argument that none of this is really a departure from Marx's previous views: Marx remains committed to the formlessness of the revolutionary state and opportunistically "usurps" the Commune as a propaganda tool. If one reads Marx as advocating for the Commune as the definitive positive form of the social revolution, then Marx is in contradiction with the rest of his own work after 1871. Indeed, one of Marx's letters seems to completely disavow the Commune, arguing that it was never going to succeed and that it should have sought to create more favourable conditions for a revolution of the whole French nation later.

I think Korsch approaches this development in Marx's thinking from a backwards-justifying perspective. In Revolutionary Commune, Korsch's primary aim is to criticise what he sees as a concerning growth in Marxists fetishising the form of the Commune and the Soviets as a necessary or sufficient condition for a revolutionary state. In doing so, Korsch aims to justify these criticisms by interpreting Marx as fundamentally agnostic and explicitly against any discussion of the usefulness of this or that form of revolutionary state. However, I believe he reads this into Marx rather than Marx being truly so stubborn on this matter. Marx had a history of supporting the sort of direct democracy that occurred in the Commune, so it seems unlikely

Workers barricade the Commune, 1871 | Photo: History Today

that he advocated for it from a purely strategic perspective. Similarly, Marx's letters after the Commune present a more nuanced analysis of it, as Marx also advocates for revolutionaries taking advantage of the "accidents" of history, in the manner that the Commune did, and that the time will never be perfectly calculatedly right.

Korsch's argument relies on a reading that Marx has deliberately downplayed the federalist character of the Commune, which is in contrast with Marx's sharply centralist views. Therefore, Korsch argues, Marx must be writing strategically in supporting the Commune. However, I believe that Korsch misses that Marx's post-Commune writing is a development consistent in both his past and future views. While it may be true that Marx downplays the federalist character of the Commune, Korsch overstates exactly how federalist the Commune really was. Ironically, Korsch making so much of the Commune's constitution is a sign of the sort of fetishism that he is criticising! In either case, this does not lead to the conclusion that Marx remained just as agnostic on the question of political form as previously – rather that criticism of federalism is perfectly consistent with support for the Commune's constitution.

Workers in the Commune, rather than sending representatives every four years or so with discretion to make decisions on the proletariat's behalf, sent yearly delegates with explicit instructions who could be recalled at a moment's notice. Korsch is correct to argue that this constitution on its own does not make a state a proletarian dictatorship, but Marx never implied this. Marx pointed out how this form allowed for the revolutionary initiative to remain with the workers themselves. This contrasts with the bourgeois republican form, in which workers express themselves in elections which he describes as singular and temporary events – a "sensation" and "moment of ecstasy" as opposed to genuine devolution of power to the masses themselves. The bourgeois form is conducive to a reactive, passive proletariat whereas the Commune form is conducive to a proactive and revolutionary one. While Marx remained open-minded on the political forms of the revolution as previously, which Korsch is correct in arguing, his support for the Commune's model clearly demonstrates newly developed views as to what forms of revolutionary state would likely arise out of the conditions of a revolutionary situation and which, Marx argued, would aid the further development of those conditions.

Marx also makes a critique of hierarchy within the state administration, where bureaucrats are chosen by higher-ups rather than elected

"[Marx's] support for the Commune's model clearly demonstrates newly developed views as to what forms of revolutionary state would likely arise"

at the local level, which Marx supports on the grounds of smashing the bourgeois state and giving power to the proletariat. After the Commune, when Marx argues that the revolutionary state is the "lever" of action for overthrowing the bourgeoisie, he points to the Commune's constitution as a political form in contrast to both the "break up" of France and the disingenuous "devolution" pursued by bourgeois republics, where localities remain subjugated to the central government and simply act as organs of its policy. Korsch's reading that Marx downplays the Commune's federalism is correct in so far as Marx ignores that the Commune's constitution advocated for voluntary association between free communes, but incorrect in so far as that same constitution advocated for continued unity of the French workers on a national level, and in

the reality that some communes sent delegates to Paris and that efforts were made to form a national revolutionary government.

This more charitable reading views Marx's support of the Commune's constitution as developing out of his opposition to rule by the particular over the whole and of the role of bureaucracy in alienating the state from the masses. Marx's analysis of how the Commune smashed these political forms and replaced them with one serving the interest of the proletariat is not so out of character that one must, as Korsch does, enforce a reading of Marx claiming that the Commune is the be-all-end-all social revolutions and then imagine that such a claim is disingenuous. Marx justifies his support by arguing that the specific political form of the Commune was particularly conducive to a socially revolutionary content and that, consistent with his previous views, the political forms produced by the material conditions of a revolution propels the content of the revolution in an increasingly revolutionary direction. Essentially, according to Marx after the Commune, while this or that form will not make a state revolutionary by definition, not all forms are created equal, and some are better than others at producing a more revolutionary content. Marx proudly advocates for the political form of the Commune while remaining as flexible as ever.

"While this or that form will not make a state revolutionary by definition, not all forms are created equal"

### Conclusion

While the Commune does not exactly represent a turning point in Marx's views, it certainly developed them in new directions. The actual, albeit brief, existence of a proletarian dictatorship shook Marx out of his committed refusal to speculate on the political forms of the revolutionary state. Instead,

Troops at the Commune, 1871 | Photo: History Today

Marx engaged with the Paris Commune's constitution as a concrete expression of the material conditions that he was waiting for, articulating how it arose from the proletariat's inherent content as a class and its emerging need to smash and replace the old state to achieve its destiny.

While he remained committed to the basic theory that the particular political form of a revolution will simply emerge from its content, he developed more nuanced views as to what these political forms can and should be as the world changed around him.

What can communists today learn from this?

Firstly, we must not be so stubborn on the question of the political form of workers' rule. We shouldn't fetishise this or that form of historic proletarian rule, but neither should we ignore history. History is rich in insights on this topic. If Marx's views on this changed with the times, the least we can do is look to the past.

Secondly, Marx provides us with a method for analysing workers' rule. What keeps the initiative with the masses? What propels the masses to go in further and further revolutionary directions? Which political forms express the political content of the workers as an international and united class?

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Are you a worker or student? We'd love to hear your perspective! Become a long-term contributor to Partisan, helping us publicize the voice of Australian workers and students. If you're politically engaged, and would like to give your perspective on current events, then contact the Partisan editing team at partisanmagazine@proton.me for more info.

# Only workers' power can halt immiseration

Edith Fischer

The Australian working class has a knife to its throat. Rising living costs have made a significant impact on wages, with workers facing a 6% cut in real living standards this year. In real terms, Australian workers have been thrown back almost two decades, with wage gains being reversed as prices climb. Those on welfare suffer a similar fate, with pensioners, students, and the unemployed crushed between rising rents and stagnant welfare payments.

Under the crushing weight of rising costs, old evils re-emerge. Cases of scurvy, a disease caused by an acute Vitamin C deficiency, are on the rise, with doctors in Western Australia warning that rising living costs are causing the re-emergence of "19th Century diseases". The Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation's medical service in Western Sydney has noted dramatic weight loss amongst patients, caused by skipping meals. The Foodbank Hunger Report, published this year, noted that 2 million households are now experiencing severe food insecurity, with millions of families skipping meals and cutting down on fresh food. In many more families parents regularly skip meals in order to feed their children, and send them to school with enough in their bellies to learn. This is the face of a war on the working class.

These numbers do not spring from nowhere. Nor are they the result of a handful of greedy monopolists. They are the result of the very real crisis in capitalist society. Systematic underinvestment in production, caused by a falling rate of profit in industry, renders supply chains brittle and vulnerable to shocks. This contributes to spikes in prices, which in turn fuel further price rises as capitalists seek to pass costs on to consumers. Capital pours into speculative markets, especially in housing, which drives up prices and rents. All the while, workers are faced with higher prices, higher rents, reduced social services, and real wage cuts.

Reforms proposed across the political spectrum are largely smoke and mirrors. The representatives of sectoral capitalist interests, the Liberal Party and their middle class allies amongst the so-called "Teals" call for the power to smash trade unions in order to crush wages. This would of course immiserate tens of thousands of workers. However, we cannot see the program of Labor in government as any less of an attack on the working class. The Albanese government has presided over this systematic attack on living standards, with everything from the collapse of the Medicare bulk-billing system, to rising dysfunction in the education system, to dramatic increases in living costs occurring under their stewardship.

In turn, the Nationals and the Greens propose regressive reforms as the solution. The proposal to break up the grocery duopoly would benefit only the ranks of smaller, less successful capitalists - farmers, small grocery chains, and various agricultural industries. For workers it would undermine trade union organising and end the monopsony power of the grocery chains, likely leading to long term increases in agricultural prices.

While many workers broadly support reforms proposed by the Labor Party and the Greens, we should be willing to point out their potential problems. A mass construction program for public housing, while urgently needed, will almost certainly have inflationary effects given the unprofitability of the building industry and the systematic underinvestment in construction inputs. Mass construction programs require reindustrialisation - a program that the middle class core of the Green movement is unlikely willing to pursue. Even if they did, which sectors of capital would be willing to invest is such a program!

The fact is that there is no simple reform to end the cost of living crisis. The crisis is caused by the profit system itself, and without doing away with such a system poverty and hunger will continue to mount. If workers want to wrest the knife from their throat, they will need to do away with middle class reformers and liberal bureaucrats, and organise for their independent class interests.

# The Democractic Republic

Maya Kaufmann

*On the dawn of March 18, Paris arose to the thunder-burst of "Vive la Commune!" What is the Commune, that sphynx so tantalising to the bourgeois mind?... It was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labour.*

- Karl Marx, The Civil War in France, 1871

History does not offer the proletariat a choice of ways. The first task of the working class is to elevate itself to the position of ruling class - that is, it must win the battle of democracy. To win this battle, the proletariat must establish for itself a working class government that represents in both form and content the historical task of the proletariat. However, as Marx so clearly elucidates, the proletariat cannot simply seize the existing apparatus of government and furnish it for its own means. What then, is the political form through which the working class can rule?

**The Modern State**

The origins of the modern state lie in the development of capitalist society, and the social crises that broke through the morass of feudalism. As is often the case, the final form of a given social order presages the coming transformation of society. In the case of feudalism, the final form of feudal society prefigured the form that the bourgeois state would take: Absolutism.

Traditionally, feudal states were necessarily decentralised and based upon powerful blocs of local nobility. In this state the King was understood as being the first amongst an entire class of aristocrats who possessed traditional rights over the lands they held. However, the crises of the 15th Century drove this system into crisis. A crisis in European agriculture brought on by the limitations of feudal relations saw the relative productivity of marginal lands fall and grain yields drop. This process was hastened by a string of famines, plagues and wars. Soon, Europe would be ravaged by peasant uprisings, and the growing power of both the urban and rural poor threatened the powers of Crown and Church. In Western Europe, where serfdom had collapsed, the solution was to consolidate the feudal state into a centralised monarchy presided over by a powerful monarch. Perry Anderson explains:

Absolutism was essentially just this: a redeployed and recharged apparatus of feudal domination, designed to clamp the peasant masses back into their traditional social position – despite and against the gains they had won by the widespread commutation of dues. - Lineages of the Absolutist State

With the centralisation of the state, many of the elements of the modern state emerge: the standing army, the military-bureaucracy, and the emergence of a notion of national sovereignty following the end of the Thirty Years War. It was this form of state that the nascent bourgeois would go on to perfect with their ascent to political power in Western Europe over the course of the 17th and 18th Century.

**The Bourgeois Republic; or, The Constitutional Oligarchy**

Rather than popular rule, what predominates today in even the most "democratic" of the bourgeois republics is a constitutional oligarchy. This reflects the contradictions of bourgeois society in general. Capitalist society is a society in which the appearance of formal equality in the free exchange of commodities, masks real inequality and domination (between labour and capital, between industry and finance, between debtor and creditor). As such, formal freedom and equality before the law and formally democratic political institutions in the Bourgeois Republic mask a state that remains, at its core, undemocratic.

The form of the Bourgeois Republic reflects this reality. Constitutionalism, which limits democratic control over the organisation and order of government by making a legal

document sacred in the functioning of government, grants political power to the legal class, and functions as a dictatorship of the dead over the living. The division of powers, which maintains elements of monarchy (in the executive) and aristocratic (in the judiciary and the undemocratic upper houses) government, limits popular control on government. The unrepresentative electoral systems allow a gang of powerful bourgeois parties to maintain their stranglehold on government. Most of all, the unaccountable military and bureaucratic strata rule without democratic mandate over a state that is theirs to command. All of these elements reflect the fundamentally undemocratic nature of the Bourgeois Republic - it is a democracy for the slave owner, for the ruling class, in which the proletariat is systematically excluded from independent political activity.

**The Commune-Republic**

How does the Commune-Republic differ from the Republic of the Bourgeois? While both are republican in the abstract, the Bourgeois Republic is a form of minority-class rule that defends the rule of the exploiters. In every Bourgeois Republic, the form of the Absolutist State is preserved with the special bodies of armed men, the military-bureaucratic state, and the limitations on democratic rule. The Democratic Republic, on the other hand, represents the exact alternative to the Bourgeois Republic in terms of historical development - both the perfection of the Republican form, and the negation of its bourgeois character.

For Marx and Lenin, the limited experience of the Paris Commune provided the immediate model of the Democratic Republic - the Commune-State. In the Commune Constitution, the division of powers would be abolished, and all power placed in the hands of an elected assembly. This assembly would be made up of popular representatives - servants of the people that would be elected yearly and bound by popular mandate under threat of recall. They would be paid the wages of a skilled worker, and expected to be both representative and political organiser - carrying out political decisions and voting on them. All revolutionary factions - that is, those who upheld the new Commune and its

Lenin addresses an all-Russian congress, 1917 | Photo: Brittanica

mandate - would be free to publish, agitate, and organise for their political views. In every neighbourhood and workshop, the real power of the Commune was in the mass meetings that elected delegates, and in the armed masses - the expanded National Guard that served as the bulwark to defend the revolution.

In our own program, we further elaborate on this model. The Democratic Republic must eliminate the federal systems that give rise to local privileges and protect powerful rural elites. It must eliminate the cabinet system, and government must be undertaken by committees directly subordinate to the popular assembly. It must establish a revolutionary militia to serve as the basis of a Red Army. And it must establish powerful organs of local government, organs of popular power that allow for proletarian protagonism in every sphere of political life from the factory to the neighbourhood, all united under the central organ of the republican government.

For us, the Commune appears as a mirage - so distant from us, almost hallucinatory. This could not be further from the reality. The Commune provides an immediate model in our own times - the political form through which we may work out the economic and social emancipation of humanity. The bourgeois republican movement promises only a reformed form of monarchical rule - the preservation of the Constitutional Oligarchy. As an alternative, we need to fight for a Democratic Republic - for the Commune in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth.

# Letters

Get in touch! Letters should be sent to **partisanmagazine@proton.me** and contain the subject "Letter: [heading]".

### Is Journalism Doomed?

MAX J, NEWCASTLE

As a modern journalism student, I find myself astounded by the crisis that modern journalism is in. Increased competition between "legacy media" and "new media" has led to increased monopolisation (as can be seen with the 2018 Nine-Fairfax merger), which has led to a tightening of editorial lines, downsized newsrooms, and more shlock.

I can confidently say that most journalists these days are trained not to be actual journalists (writers with opinions presenting facts and analysis to readers), but instead to be hacks. Outlets such as Junkee and Buzzfeed are two of many that exist solely to present schlock and garbage to a mass readership. Young, talented journalists are being roped into writing up listicles about dildos and Mean Girls references.

Gone are the days of hard-hitting investigative journalism, accurate and serious reporting, or even basic professionalism in the industry. For that, you can rely on, at best, Nick McKenzie of The Age (if he's having a good day). Journalism is becoming increasingly individualised. YouTubers and Internet personalities such as Jordan "Friendlyjordies" Shanks, Andrew "Channel 5" Callaghan etc are now considered "journalists", least of all serious ones. Try not to laugh.

The YouTube-ization of contemporary journalism is a lethal threat to serious journalism, especially political journalism. A manufactured distrust in mainstream news has funnelled people into the lion's den of hacks, charlatans, and youtube comedians who make Labor Party funded(?) documentaries. Where once people could rely on some semblance of professionalism in the form of publications, audiences now flock to Personalities. Professional trust is replaced with parasocial obsessions and deeply unserious, one-sided personal relationships with internet brands. Far be it from me to be a snob or an elitist, but the turn toward "edutainment" has been perfidious and only served to make the spectacle more widespread by hijacking education. Learning should be engaging, but it shouldn't necessarily be 'fun'. Let's go back to normal and separate learning from 'having fun'. It is a total distortion.

It is clear now that communist militants must also be journalists: they must present the facts of capitalism to the working class, and present them with an analysis which can broaden and influence their political engagements. Communist publications must be journalistic. There is a place for dense theory journals, but they should supplement the reporting and analyses we make on the struggle, not be our focus. The working class needs to be informed of the various struggles taking place not only internationally, but domestically. Presenting them with our reporting on actions, on regroupments, on organisational activity, lets them know that communists aren't stuffy idiots arguing with each other over inane things online, they are do-ers.

God forbid, if we don't do it, the working class will be subject to another 20+ years of Green Left. I could do with a Top 10 albums to un-fuck journalism listicle right about now.

I intend to at some point present Partisan's readers with a student's take on journalism and how communists should relate to and engage with journalism. It is something I don't see much of. We need more serious journalists, not professional sectarians or listicle writers.

### Write something new for once

BRUNHILDA O, MELBOURNE

Recently I've been reading a lot of the theory put out by Red Ant as part of my job on the Communist Unity Committee, and there's a lot of reflections on their particular interpretation of the Russian Revolution and banging on about Lenin's two stage theory of revolution. In fact there's plenty of articles reflecting on whichever big success in the third world helps prove the point of their editorial line that first world socialists primary focus must be on defending and aiding the revolution in the third world.

I was looking over these articles, and I kept on running into one fundamental thought.

What's the fucking point of the two-stage revolution theory in Australia today? What is the point of theorising over the role of Communists to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution in one of the most advanced capitalist powers on the planet?

But this is broader than just one political line I disagree immensely with. Nearly every communist groupuscule in the world will have at least three articles elucidating their particularly perfect insight into the Russian revolution and what we can learn from it today. Now most groups will then have another icon they hold up and bang on about. Maoists will talk to empty lecture halls on the need for a protracted people's war in Sydney, and Third Worldists will explain the importance of Vietnam.

Now this isn't a purely Marxist phenomena; Anarchists will spend days nitpicking over where exactly the CNT-FAI went wrong in Spain, or how if the Bolsheviks hadn't stabbed them in the back, they would have liberated all of Ukraine.

Ironically of all groups the Spartacist League seem to have the best approach to this at least in theory. I was listening to their debate with the League for the Fourth International and somebody I don't know or care who made a point that the most important reflections we can

possibly make are the ones about how we as organisations have failed in the past.

I'd much rather read a hundred articles on the tactics and culture of organising say Landforces, or on the lessons learnt through the Victorian Socialists campaign then yet another bloody article on how the Bolsheviks did nothing wrong, long live Lenin and whichever big head the author thinks goes after him.

Now this isn't to say we shouldn't remember our victories, just that we need to move beyond simply looking at the same old victories and defeats and just twiddling our thumbs.

**The Patriarchy**

PETER E, SYDNEY

Surely the biggest challenge we all face is fragmentation. Climate-focused activists tend to prioritise a deforestation action over a marine sanctuary action, and our ocean-focused friends will fight plastic, but may not to turn up to a coal-train action.

We fight for climate – which includes anti-logging and marine sanctuaries. But does it include plastic reduction and recycling? Of course it does, but we can't be in six places at one time! Fighting for Climate intuitively includes fighting for Equality of Opportunity, how could it not? That's why Climate activists naturally support Gaza, and Palestine. So, are you are Forest campaigner, or a Gaza campaigner ... or are you a Trans-rights campaigner, or a Reproductive rights campaigner?

I capitalise the labels of these campaigns because we seem them as distinct. But they are not. They are the same fight! But the use of these labels fragments us, divides our energy. And it greatly assists everyone we fight against.

We are all fighting exactly the same enemy, and by naming the enemy we will realise that we are one army of activists; one powerful body fighting a single battle.

It sounds like a cliché, but it is absolutely true. Our battle is against The Patriarchy. The Patriarchy is no content with a status quo. The Patriarchy wants to force us back into the 'Good Old Days' it wants to make us 'Great Again'. It is in love with the last century.

The Patriarchy believes in the days of colonies, of women as baby-factories. The Patriarchy is the antithesis of everything we believe. They see the days of Empire as the greatest of times when white men ruled the world, when brown, black and yellow-skinned humans were cheap labour, when they could steal the land and resources of those brown, black and yellow-skinned people to make themselves rich beyond measure.

The patriarchy belies many other things; that their god is the only true god. They believe that the strong should rule over the weak, that men are worth more than women and should rule over women; that the able-bodied are worth more than the less abled, and that foreigners are thieves, coming into their country to corrupt their heritage.

They also believe that masculinity is a prerequisite of power, which is they demean women and despise queer folk. And the believe that money bus people; bosses own their workers' lives, and that trade-unions are the devil's work.

The list goes on, but the message is simple. We are one army. Every climate-activist, forest-activist, ocean-activist is in our army. Every LGBTQIA+-rights activist is in our army. Every pro-Palestine activist, every women's rights activist, every workers' rights activist is in our army.

**Write us a letter!**

Writing us a letter is easy, and is a good alternative to writing a full article or essay. Letters are submitted like normal articles are, through our email.

A letter could be any kind of statement or observation, in around 500 words or less. The shorter the better. In a letter, you should give your opinion or statement on something, then finish off with your name and city (any name works - many of our writers use pseudonyms).

In particular, we encourage letters written as a reply to other articles. Of course, you are also free to write a full article in reply to another article, but sometimes it may be better to simply write a letter in. Letters may also be replies to other letters, and of course, an article can also be a reply to a letter.

You could also write one directed to the editorial team at Partisan, and if you do, we will submit a reply in the following issue. We aim to build a lively letters section as part of our overall goal to establish Partisan as a platform of open debate and polemic between and amongst the organised Left.

Letters should be sent to **partisanmagazine@proton.me** and contain the subject "Letter: [heading]". The content of your letter can be sent within the body of the email as opposed to a document attached to the email.

**Partisan 3 Crossword Answers**

1 – Hawke, 2 – AWU, 3 – Ultraleft, 4 – Rebelworker, 5 – Scab, 6 – EBA, 7 – Gallagher, 8 – Patrick, 9 – Solidarity, 10 – RAFFWU, 11 - Chifley

# Statement on the one year anniversary of October 7th

RCO Central Commitee

It is now one year since the October 7th jail break from the Gaza concentration camp that preceded the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip perpetuated by the Israeli regime. Mass murder, war crimes have been the order of the day in Gaza, and increasingly the West Bank as the Zionist war machine enters its final death drive. Total siege of the Strip, and the destruction of 85% of Gaza's infrastructure including basic services and shelter has led to starvation and disease, including the return of Polio. The Lancet puts the rolling death toll over the last twelve months at over 186,000, close to 10% of Gaza's pre-genocide population.

Despite this all of the bourgeoisie media raise their voices to bemoan supposed 'antisemitism', to denounce the 'mob' in the streets and to defend Israel's 'right to defend itself'. From liberal bourgeois outfits such as Media publishing more muted 'concerns', to more tepid support for the Israeli state, and finally, to the more conservative news outlets espousing both brutal attacks on the Palestine solidarity movement and rabid defence of Israel, the Australian bourgeoise have desperately been trying to pull back public support for Palestine and temper condemnation of Israel. Recently the entire press has raised their anger over 'terrorist' flags at demonstrations, raising the ridiculous standard that it is illegal to support any other side in the genocide apart from the Zionist entity.

The Palestinian people have a right to self-determination and democracy, free of the 75 year-long Israeli colonial occupation and its brutal military dictatorship. Despite the wanton destruction imposed since October 7th on Palestine in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and now the expansion of Israel's rampage to Lebanon, where it has killed over 2,000 people. Israel is still refusing to accept an end to the slaughter, with the United States unwilling to impose one despite its verbal promises to do so. Thus, it seems that one year into the slaughter there is still no end in sight.

However, Israel's internal contradictions, simmering before October 7th, have since blown open. The Israeli settler state is stuck in an awkward balance between two main political poles. The first main pole is the fascist settler strata, who demand the total destruction of the Palestinian people and the establishment of a theocratic, expansionist Greater Israel. Recently this has been most prominently expressed through riots in support of rapist Israeli soldiers, and subsequent pogroms against Palestinians throughout the West Bank. This has had the effect of stretching the Israeli state's image and internal stability. The second main pole, is Israel's liberal Zionist ruling class faction strata, who are intent on maintaining the status quo. The status quo meaning the existing apartheid regime, and Israel's position as a key US client state and proxy, maintaining control and safeguarding US influence. The illusion of the stability of such a project has been irreversibly damaged by the resistance of Palestinians to their subjugation, and the state's inability to integrate Palestinians in a one state solution, whilst maintaining Israel as a Jewish-supremacist ethnostate. The Israeli working class is unwilling to give up the fruits awarded to them by Israel's imperial core status and the colonisation of Palestinian land and the exploitation of their labour, but Israel's expanding wars and genocide only strengthen the threats to Israel's security and deplete its ability to extract forced labour from Palestinians, with almost all Palestinian labour from the West Bank, and all in its entirety in the case of the Gaza Strip, cut off since October 7th. This has had a weakening effect on the Israeli economy. Further weakened by millions emigrating, loss of investment confidence, Yemeni naval harassment, desertions, growing international pariah status, and the ongoing war costs, improvement does not appear to be on the

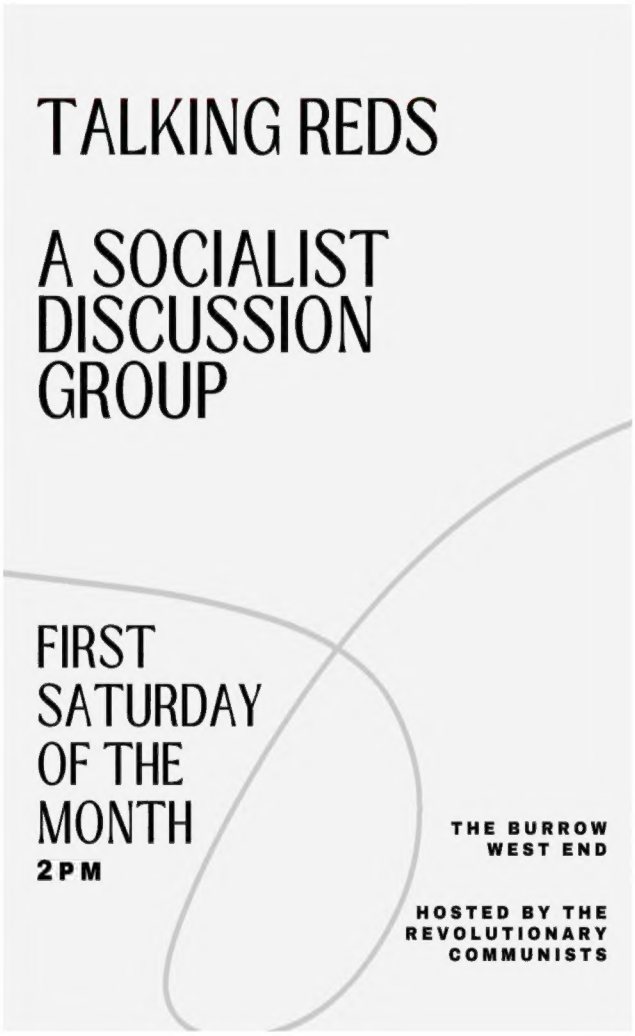
horizon. The brutal total eradication of the Gaza Strip will not resolve Israel's instability, nor will a reoccupation of the south of Lebanon.

Despite the Iran-aligned national bourgeoisie Axes of Resistance's efforts, they are unable and unwilling to carry out the struggle for the liberation of Palestine to its conclusion: the necessary creation of a secular socialist republic in Palestine and the entirety of the Middle East. Such a path needs to be undertaken in order to remove the bourgeois comprador regimes for good, and to bring the working class to power.

Similarly, the legalist challenges though global bourgeoise institutions such as the United Nations and the International Court of Justice is stillborn, blocked by the imperialist powers who run these bodies into being either total ineffectual, unenforced and blocked. These bodies serve to defend the world system and resolve disputes among the international bourgeoisie, not to fight imperialism.

There is only one solution to the Palestinian question: Intifada, Revolution!

For a Socialist Democratic Republic of the Middle East!




# Freedom for all political prisoners!

**Partisan Editors**

As Russia continues to wage an imperialist war against Ukraine, Communists of all stripes have fallen under the boot of state repression (both in Russia and Ukraine). Oppose the Moscow and Kyiv gangsters, demand the release of all political prisoners!

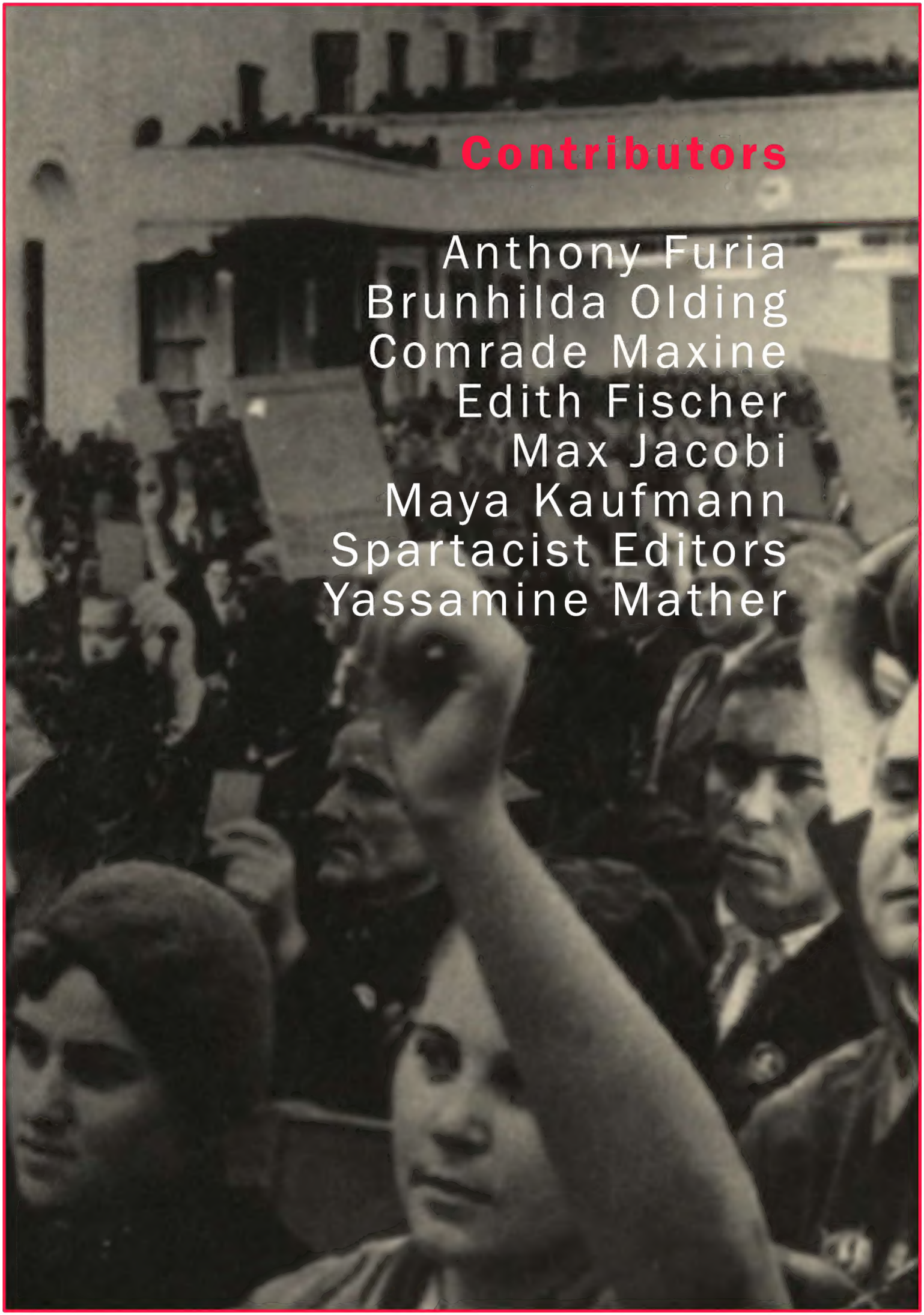
Russian Marxist Boris Kagarlitsky was imprisoned by the Russian state under phony "anti-terrorism" charges in 2023. As of February 2024, he has been sentenced to five years in a prison colony (Meduza).

Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service on April 25th 2024. As of writing, he is being held in Nikolaev in deplorable conditions. He is being falsely charged with being a Russian state operative and a propagandist for Moscow's imperialist invasion. If found guilty, he faces a life sentence (WSWS).

Many more communists, trade unionists, and anti-war protesters are being incarcerated arbitrarily by the Russian and Ukrainian governments. We must support them all, and demand their immediate release.

In addition, the Partisan calls for the freedom of all political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier who still languish in the prisons of the American imperialists. In Britain, the Filton 10 now face years in prison for their actions against the war profiteers at Elbit Systems. One of these comrades, Zoë Rogers, has just spent her 21st Birthday behind bars.

Freedom to the Prisoners!



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